

number of institutions that submit a qualified application.

H.R. 3629 makes small but significant changes in the Higher Education Act. The bill should have the unanimous support of the House.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MCKEON. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEASE). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. MCKEON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3629, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MCKEON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 3629, the bill just passed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Ms. Wanda Evan, one of his secretaries.

□ 1600

SUPPORTING A NATIONAL CHARTER SCHOOLS WEEK

Mr. PETRI. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 310) supporting a National Charter Schools Week.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 310

Whereas charter schools are public schools authorized by a designated public body and operating on the principles of accountability, parent flexibility, choice, and autonomy;

Whereas in exchange for the flexibility and autonomy given to charter schools, they are held accountable by their sponsors for improving student achievement and for their financial and other operations;

Whereas 36 States, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico have passed laws authorizing charter schools;

Whereas 35 States, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico will have received more than \$350 million in grants from the Federal Government by the end of the current fiscal year for planning, startup, and implementation of charter schools since their authorization in 1994

under title X, part C of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 8061 et seq.);

Whereas 32 States, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico are serving approximately 350,000 students in more than 1,700 charter schools during the 1999 to 2000 school year;

Whereas charter schools can be vehicles both for improving student achievement for students who attend them and for stimulating change and improvement in all public schools and benefitting all public school students;

Whereas charter schools in many States serve significant numbers of students with lower income, students of color, and students with disabilities;

Whereas the Charter Schools Expansion Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-278) amended the Federal grant program for charter schools authorized by title X, part C of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 8061 et seq.) to strengthen accountability provisions at the Federal, State, and local levels to ensure that charter public schools are of high quality and are truly accountable to the public;

Whereas 7 of 10 charter schools report having a waiting list;

Whereas students in charter schools nationwide have similar demographic characteristics as students in all public schools;

Whereas charter schools have enjoyed broad bipartisan support from the Administration, the Congress, State governors and legislatures, educators, and parents across the Nation; and

Whereas charter schools are laboratories of reform and serve as models of how to educate children as effectively as possible: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That—

(1) the Congress acknowledges and commends the charter school movement for its contribution to improving our Nation's public school system; and

(2) it is the sense of the Congress that—

(A) a National Charter Schools Week should be established; and

(B) the President should issue a proclamation calling on the people of the United States to conduct appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities to demonstrate support for charter schools in communities throughout the Nation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. PETRI) and the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. ROEMER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. PETRI).

Mr. PETRI. Mr. Speaker, I reserve my time.

Mr. ROEMER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. PETRI) for giving me the courtesy of going first.

Mr. Speaker, as the gentleman and my friend from Wisconsin (Mr. PETRI) noted, I introduced H. Con. Res. 310, which is a resolution supporting a National Charter Schools Week. It is also a bipartisan resolution introduced by myself, but with the support of the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. UPON), the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE), the gentleman from Pennsyl-

vania (Mr. GOODLING), the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN), the gentleman from California (Mr. DOOLEY), the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN), the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND), the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SANCHEZ), the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. PETRI), and others. So we are acting in the best spirit of this House in trying to go forward with a bipartisan resolution on charter schools.

Mr. Speaker, Mark Twain once said that there is a big difference between using the right word and the almost right word, like the difference between "lightning" and a "lightning bug." There is a big difference there, just as there is a requirement as we approach public education today in America that we have the right ideas; the right reforms; the right bold, creative initiatives to help move this country in public education forward in this brand new century. Charter schools are part of that right reform and right-now idea.

This National Charter Schools Week seeks to recognize the many accomplishments of charter schools around the country. Seven out of ten charter schools currently have waiting lists.

I also joined in 1998 with the gentleman from California (Mr. RIGGS), to draft a bill that was signed into law to strengthen the accountability provisions, to provide even new support for charter schools around the country.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not recognize the role that President Clinton and Secretary Riley have played in supporting this innovative new idea of charter schools. In 1994 there were less than a dozen charter schools through the whole Nation. In 1999, there are over 1,700 charter schools, and we will probably have over 3,000 charter schools by the year 2002.

Charter schools in many States serve significant numbers of students with lower incomes, students of color, students with disabilities. They are not schools that attempt to cream the best students or cherry pick the best students; they are public schools that attempt to educate in innovative new ways all of the available students.

Mr. Speaker, I think one of the big areas we have seen progress in for charter schools, and I will give an example, to dismiss one of the myths about charter schools, is that we recently had a hearing on the growth of charter schools in our Subcommittee on Education last month. We had Irene Sumida, the Director of Instruction at the Fenton Avenue Charter School in California, testify before the committee. Her school has a population in which about 84 percent of the students are identified as Title I students, meaning many of the poorest students. Sixty-four percent of the students at Fenton are limited English proficient. Ninety percent of the students qualify for free and reduced meals. Eighty-one